Musical history of the St. Mary's Mission community, 1841-1891

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A MUSICAL HISTORY OF THE ST. MARY'S MISSION COMMUNITY:
1841 - 1891

by

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The historical role of music in Stevensville, Montana, during the Jesuit mission tenure is the focus of this study. Father Pierre DeSmet arrived in 1841, and began the first community in Montana, St. Mary's Mission. This Ravalli County landmark is thirty miles south of Missoula, borders the Bitterroot River, and is shadowed by St. Mary's Mountain.

From the opening of the mission, the music and culture of the church influenced the people of the region. The Fathers of the Jesuit mission intended to leave their Christian mark on the landscape and people. In 1842, Father Mengarini organized the first instrumental music ensemble in the state of Montana.

The Flathead Indians brought their own musical heritage to the mission. These first inhabitants used music very functionally; it was an integral part of their everyday existence. The Flathead musical contribution is significant and vital to the artistic development which occurred.

Fort Owen, an important trading post within a mile of the mission, also figured highly into this scenario. Many cultural events transpired there and in the eventual town of Stevensville itself. As life progressed, the site of major musical influence shifted from the mission, to the fort, and eventually to the town. These three factors worked, both collectively and separately, to create the musical history of the St. Mary's Mission Community.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................ ii

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ......................... v

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION ................................. 1

II. THE FLATHEAD INDIAN MUSIC ............... 5

Native Life Cycle and Culture ................. 5
Musical Characteristics, Instruments and Performance Practices .... 7
Song Types and Ceremonies .................... 11
The White Man Arrives ......................... 17

III. THE COMING OF THE JESUITS AND THEIR MUSIC. ........... 23

Four Indian Requests For "Black Robes" ....... 23
DeSmet Enters with a New Culture: 1840 ......... 24
St. Mary's Beginnings .......................... 27
Father Point and the Hunts .................... 30
Father Mengarini .................................. 38
Brother Specht .................................... 43
Father Ravalli ..................................... 44
Unsuccessful Cultural Assimilation .......... 45
St. Mary's Mission Closes: 1850 ................. 50

IV. THE ST. MARY'S MUSICAL COMMUNITY EXPANDS ... 56

Fort Owen - The Hub of Civilization: 1850's ....... 56
Music, Celebration, and Activity Abound: Early 1860's .......... 61
Expanding Population and Development: Mid 1860's ......... 66
The Mission Joins the Fort and Town: Late 1860's ............. 67
The Fort Declines and Stevensville Grows: 1870's & 80's ........ 73
The Flatheads Are Forced Out and Stevensville Dominates: 1890's ... 77
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Flathead Flageolet ...................... 9
2. "Hail, Queen of the Sea" ............... 35
3. "He Has Become the Food of the Wanderer" .... 36
4. "Praise the Saviour, O Sion" [sic] ........ 37
5. Mengarini's Flathead Transcription ........ 40
The people calling St. Mary's of the Rocky Mountains their home have been diverse, and the story of their music is significant. The fervor with which they approached music has been recorded and herein accumulated and detailed for the interested reader.

The location of the study centers around St. Mary's Mission, situated in Stevensville, Montana. This Ravalli County landmark is thirty miles south of Missoula, borders the Bitterroot River, and is shadowed by St. Mary's Mountain. The native American Flathead Indians ruled over the land for many years, including the period of 1841-91 which is under investigation here.

Initially, the investigation sought to trace the development of wind instrument ensemble music in Stevensville, Montana, from its auspicious beginnings to the present. Over a four-year period, the focus of the effort widened to define a more encompassing range. Available materials indicated that music, especially in those early pioneer days, was not segregated into particular and definable areas. Reference sources describe a broader coverage of music as a whole, including both
vocal and instrumental aspects of the art. In addition, no known historical effort includes the significant contribution of music to the lives of these Bitterroot Valley people.

Likewise, the time span originally selected proved too broad and hence, included too much general material. The study, then, is confined to the dates of the St. Mary's Mission, 1841-91, as the missionaries had the first and most significant period of influence on the community and its music.

The initiation of this specific research project occurred with the encouragement of Stevensville resident and acclaimed authoress, Lucylle Evans. It was while perusing her book, *St. Mary's in the Rocky Mountains*, required reading for any local resident, that an interest developed in the area's past. According to Ms. Evans' publication, the Jesuit Missionaries arrived during 1841 and established the first community. In the process, they also began the first instrumental ensemble in the region, a notable musical development. Father Mengarini, a musician of only minimal ability, established, taught, and performed with the unique ensemble.

A wide variety of resource materials was utilized in the creation of this document. Written records of musical events in the time of exploration and survival are not common. Available materials indicate a number of musical occurrences and developments. These are included here to
help depict a complete history.

The need for such a study can be itemized. The musical life of a people illustrates, among other things, its culture, concern for life, and the advancement of artistic evolution taking place in a growing society. The study shows a community in constant social and economic fluctuation and illustrates how music helped these changes to occur, and likewise how musical development reflects this dynamic process.

The main body of the paper has been organized into three basic chapters, each dealing with a time span corresponding to a significant historical event. Chapter II describes the native Flathead Indians who first inhabited the area. They used music in a very functional manner, as it was an integral part of their daily existence. To have ignored these people and their own music in such a study would have been inappropriate.

Chapter III delves into the significant contributions to culture and music that the white men in black robes brought to the region. The Jesuit Missionaries, led by Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet, a member of the Society of Jesus, arrived with the intention of leaving their Christian mark on the landscape and the people. They were successful in achieving their objective.

Chapter IV continues the description of the history through two other milestones in local development: the establishment of Fort Owen and the platting of the town of
Stevensville. Fort Owen was the major commercial outpost for thousands of square miles of new frontier, and the many musical events that occurred there shaped the lives of the inhabitants. A white pioneering settlement called Stevensville grew around the mission and fort communities. The social and political powers of the town figured greatly in the cultural environment.

The reader will see how the Indians and these three institutions: the mission, the fort, and the town of Stevensville worked both together and individually to create significant musical development. The importance, frequency, and surprisingly high level of musical artistry in such a remote region is notable. Herein is a musical history of the St. Mary's Community.
CHAPTER II

THE FLATHEAD INDIAN MUSIC

The first known inhabitants of the area which was to become St. Mary's of Montana were the Flathead Indians. Their musical contributions were many and occasionally noted in early documents. The primitive Indian music is an important aspect of cultural history for the region.

Native Life Cycle and Culture

The confederation of Flathead, Kootenai, and Pend Oreille Indians formed by treaty in 1855 was chartered as the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes. Flatheads and Pend Oreilles both are Salish peoples, and the Flatheads have always preferred to be called the Salish. However, Salish is a linguistic classification, referring to Indians who speak Salish. Because most of the St. Mary's Indians were of Flathead heritage, they will be referred to in this work by the name of Flatheads.

These were migratory native people who came to the beautiful area during spring and fall seasons hundreds of years before the 1805 appearance of the white man. They came to dig the Bitterroot flower, a plant of the region having showy pink or white flowers. It was the root of the
flower which was dried and used as a food staple during the colder seasons. William Clark, the famous explorer, expressed his displeasure with the flavor of the vegetable noting that the roots were "wholly unsavory to the more refined palate."¹

George Catlin, a painter and pioneering lawyer, further described the action of the Flathead Indians. "In the Rocky Mountains there are the funny little fellows, the 'Root Diggers,' who burrow amongst the rocks, and live by digging roots . . . ,"² he wrote. Their annual cycle consisted of the winter buffalo hunt, the spring Bitterroot dig, the summer fishing, and the fall berry and root gathering.

The music of the Flatheads was an integral part of their daily lives and was distinctly functional. Music was the "harmonic sound of living"³ for these people; they intensely enjoyed music for its own sake, yet they felt it functioned to bring them luck. Many ordinary tasks and special occasions were performed with musical accompaniment, and dancing often was present also.

Music served three spheres of activity: entertainment, religious ceremony, and personal power. As in Euro-American culture, music was utilized for entertainment and religion in much the same manner.

At dances, the music of drums, voices, flutes, and rattles portrayed the body of the dancer itself. The song and dance often imitated the sights and sounds of nature -
bird, animal, hunter or fighter.

Song and dance were typically a part of the religious experience of these people. Practically all rites were conducted to music.

Music was used to gain personal power by the young Flathead on his vision quest. During the ceremony, the guardian spirit appeared and became the source of power and well-being throughout life. It has been noted that "dancing and singing were parts of the ceremony." At the same time, the supplicant received his own song from the spirit, symbolizing individual and personal power. The spirit instructed the person when and where the song should be used for power.

Distinct song types described and accompanied acts of sweating, love, scouting, battle, and various dance steps. The songs were mostly non-verbal chants with the message contained in the note pattern, at times accompanied by a drum or flute. Each song was an entity in itself and was never to be confused with another song or type.

Musical Characteristics, Instruments and Performance Practices

The music of the Flathead Indian was characterized by anthropologists Barbara and Alan Merriam as "bold, open, with prominent dominant but more seconds and fourths, and fewer thirds and downswooping." Melodies usually began high in the voice and descended the interval of a fourth followed by neighboring tones.
Voices and flutes performed simple unison melodies, occasionally separated by the interval of an octave. The drums merely accompanied the melodic contour of the song. The instruments were hand-made from materials directly available in the native environment. Playing techniques were simple and did not interfere with the art of music.

The tone of the end-blown flute, or flageolet, was produced through the use of a slit at the upper end of the main body where the air stream was split by a buckskin thong tied around each end of the opening. Seven finger holes were used to create the desired pitches. Each instrument was made to the craftsman's specifications with length and tone hole placement arbitrarily positioned. As a result, the length of each instrument differed, changing the relative pitch center. In addition, the placement of the tone holes altered the interval size between pitches. In performance, the player held the flageolet much as the European clarinet is grasped; with the instrument drawn to the mouth, left hand above the right, and positioned comfortably in front of the body.

In general, the flageolet was used for love songs, playing in the form of a "theme and variation," where the melody is performed and then followed by an adaptation of that same line. The instrument construction produced a rough pentatonic scale. Grace notes were commonly employed, and narrow intervals predominated. Shown in Figure 1 is a modern day instrument constructed very much
in the traditional manner, as included in Merriam work "Ethnography of Flathead Indian Music."
The two types of drums used by the Flathead Indians were the large war drum and the small hand drum. Both were constructed of wooden frames, covered with stretched deer skin. The player struck the top of the drum with a tree limb, stripped of its bark. A deer hide was fastened around one end to serve as a beater, while the balance of the stick functioned as a handle. In performance, the war drum was placed on the ground and played by at least four men seated around the instrument. The hand drum, however, was used by a standing individual.

A drum accompanied the majority of Flathead songs with a strong steady beat, but was "at the same time often almost completely disjointed from the melodic rhythm." The drum served to establish the tempo before the singing and to indicate the close of a song through the use of noticeably heavy accents.

The most common indication to stop was the halving of drum tempo along with an abrupt increase in volume which occurred several moments before the song was to end. At that point, the drum either dropped out entirely or played very lightly followed by very loud accents to end the song.

The dances in general consisted of little jumps, more or less lively, according to the beat of the drum. This instrument was played by the men, while all united in the song. In conjunction with the dancing, drumming, and singing, the Indians would "break the monotony, or lend some new interest to the scene, occasionally [by adding] a
sudden, piercing scream."9

Upon the death of a tribal member, the entire camp immediately moved to a new site, and all remained in mourning for a period of four days. During these four days, all singing and dancing was forbidden. In this manner, the Indian showed respect for the fallen one.

Song Types and Ceremonies

Each Flathead musical composition had a specific purpose. Songs were performed with many activities, and often were the focal point of dramatic ceremonies. The artistic work was usually both the central element and accompaniment of the function.

In the case of the Owl Dance, the drum was used in a significantly different manner than normal. Light drum strokes indicated where the dancers "should turn around in their places before continuing in their clockwise motion about a center marking."10

The Praying Dance was commonly performed with the gathering of the Bitterroot in June. The ceremony was presented under the shade of a big tree, where men and women formed a circle singing songs while moving in a clockwise direction. After each melody, the dancers would raise the "right hand towards the Sun and Pray for good health."11 Each then lowered the hand to the earth in hopes of abundant food.

Frequently, marriages were held in connection with
this celebration. Those couples who wished to wed notified the chief of the tribe, who then announced that the Marriage Song would be sung. The young couples formed a circle with the bride facing the back of the groom, and all danced in a clockwise direction. After several dances, the chief prayed that the couples might enjoy a good future.

A song associated directly with the quest for food was the Tidings Song. It was sung when buffalo were sighted on the hunting expeditions, thanking the Great Spirit for the opportunity to take the prey. The Flathead shaman, or medicine man, also practiced song and dance in order to bring the buffalo within the range of the camp. Flatheads believed that good and evil spirits pervaded the world and were summoned or heard through inspired priests acting as mediums.

The Canvas Dance was performed in anticipation of the departure of a war or hunting party from the camp. The occupants of each tipi joined a small group of people which began at one end of the camp. Gradually increasing in size, the party sang songs from tipi to tipi while carrying a buffalo robe until all were included. As each person entered, one hand was used to hold and pull the robe while the other struck it, producing a rhythmic accompaniment to the singing. As such ceremonies progressed, the war or hunting party made its final preparations and departed silently from camp.

The Flathead War Dance, Snake Dance, and Scalp Dance
were used on special occasions when song and dance celebrated battle. "The purpose of these dances was to obtain the interposition of the supernatural on the side of the Flathead." The War Dance was intended to invoke guardians. Wishful thinking and the telling of past victories aspired to excite the warriors against the enemy.

The counterclockwise motion of a War Dance was performed with much hopping and excitement. If any object, such as a feather, bell, or other ornament, dropped during the dance, a particularly designated person would pick it up and return it only after a specific song had been sung.

More preparation for battle occurred in the performance of the Snake Dance. A particular warrior began at a designated spot away from the dance grounds with a small group following him in single file. With snake-like movements and special music accompanied by hand drums, the company wound their way to the dance grounds, where the War Dance was to commence. Drums were beat without any singing for several hours to warn the tribal members of the upcoming dance.

The Scalp Dance was performed following the successful war party's return to camp. The warriors used a spear, or coup stick, placing the scalps of the defeated enemy on top as a sign of prestige and success. Thus a "grading of warriors according to valor could be accomplished." Song and dance followed. The women sang and danced in a circle while insulting the enemy tribe and did not stop until the
scalp-taking warrior gave a present to each.

Also sung during the display was the Song of Victory.

As the party galloped around the camp,

the triumphal chant began, accompanied by the drums. The high voices of the women mingled pleasingly with the bass voices of the men. Each phrase ended in a sharp cry of joy. Excited by the warlike music, the horses advanced proudly.  

In the middle of the dancing arena, "women were dancing. Off to one side were the musicians whose instruments were piercing whistles and drums, beaten more or less rapidly depending on the nature of the presentation."  

Elaborate headdresses were made for the event, often composed of eagles' feathers and purple bands. According to one account, "the truth is that the undulating movements of such headgear harmonized with those of the dance and the music, having about them something magical, not always found amid the luxuries of civilization."

In Indian culture, the sweathouse ritual was an integral religious experience. An enclosure large enough for six to eight persons was constructed and securely covered except for a flap entrance. An outside fire near the door heated stones which were then taken into the lodge and watered, producing a sauna effect. Special songs for sweating were sung with the rhythmic accompaniment of willow sticks tapping on the hot stones. The steam was thought to drive out the evil spirits from the bodies of the participants. To wash themselves clean of the spirits, a concluding bath in an adjoining creek finished the
The Gift or Round Dance was a social affair without "magico-religious significance." The dance was a very simple entertainment, with a ring of singers and dancers encircling the drummers. The person who requested the dance was expected to offer a present to the invited one, with prestige marked by the size of the gift. Often at the end of the dance, the couples exchanged roles, and a gift of even greater value was presented.

The Wake-up Song took place after many special events and celebrations. At approximately 4:00 a.m., a group of Flathead Indians, carrying deerhoof rattles, sang a special song to wake those who were sleeping. This song was performed by those individuals who had not slept since the celebration the previous night!

The Mid-Winter Festival was largely identified with "food-getting and the renewal of guardian spirit powers." Winter life for these people was typified by the struggle to remain well-fed and warm. The first part of the festival was the Camas Dance. Camas, similar to the Bitterroot flower, was dug, dried, and consumed in much the same manner. The Flathead often incorrectly referred to both blossoms as camas. The prayer for an adequate supply of vegetable food in the spring was followed by a ring dance of both men and women which often led to marriages.

* A memorial exists just northeast of St. Mary's where the actual sweat lodges were once located. The area is included as part of the Lee Metcalf National Game Refuge.
Each dancer presented his or her most private song to renew the communion with the guardian spirits, with some inspired to present a spontaneous musical offering. The celebration continued with the selection and cutting down of a medicine tree which became the center of the shaman's activities for the next few days.

After four days, the ecstatic Bluejay Dance commenced. The Bluejay shamans began by constructing a unique sweathouse where all participants were purified. A fervid dance to the rhythm of deerhoof rattles and chanting followed all night until the Bluejay spirit entered the shaman's body. With the new spirit, the shaman healed the sick and foretold the future before having the spirit driven from him.

Certain contests, also, included the use of music. The Stick or Bone Game was a gambling event accompanied by songs and rhythmical tapping on a log in front of each opposing team. The general principle of the game was for two groups to speculate in which hand a marked bone was hidden. As one side lost the bones, the counterparts took up their own song. Some individual members called upon their special powers to ascertain the location of the marked bone, and others cast magical spells to win.

The return of scouts, too, was heralded by a distinctive aural sign "such as the cry of the wolf." Upon hearing the signal, the people gathered and offered a song for the accompaniment of the scouts' return to camp.
The Scout Song readied the tribe for the news to be reported to them. Often, the information which the scout relayed concerned approaching callers.

Song and dance was the Indian way of showing how highly they valued a visitor's presence and how gratified they were to have him witness one of their artistic displays. When the Flathead were dancing, one observer noted "the youngest child capable of walking to the oldest . . . whose feeble limbs required the aid of a staff in their movements through the dance" would participate in their best costumes. Complete with jingling bells, the Flatheads welcomed their guests warmly with song and dance.

The White Man Arrives

Doubtless, there must have been special celebrations of singing and dancing when the scouts brought the news of visitors with white skin, for they were thought to be Gods. The white man changed the Indians' lives forever.

The information which directly follows is deemed important background material for the study yet precedes events prior to 1841, the embarkation of this work. When the historic exploration team of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark came upon the Flatheads in 1805, the Indians expected to play an equal and satisfactory role in a new bi-cultural civilization. These native Americans were ready to be schooled and wished to share in the technology created by the white man. They had heard of the religious
powers and had also seen the firearm in action and wanted these for their tribe.

In 1816, "a group of . . . Catholic Iroquois had migrated westward from Caughnawaga, near Montreal, intermarried and settled among the Flathead." One of these Iroquois, who had traveled west with The American Fur Company, Big Ignace, proved to be one of the most influential leaders in converting the Flathead to Catholicism. The Flathead Indian perceived great power available through the new faith and pursued it, hoping for additional advantage in warfare and food quest.

Another source of contact with the white man was the advancing fur trade itself. The era of the far western fur trade of the nineteenth century brought with it mountain men who were to later open the area to development by providing the civilized world with a knowledge of its geography. Many of these trappers admitted their surprise as they moved into the region, at hearing the "savages" singing and reciting Christian hymns and prayers.

The Flatheads were observed in 1820 practicing the religious ceremonies of both pagan and Christian ideologies. They adopted many foreign practices, including the Prophet Dance, which amalgamated certain Christian elements into native song and dance. Until the arrival of the Jesuits, fur trade was basically the sole influx of "civilization" into this newly-discovered area. "Aside from their contributions as explorers, however, the..."
trappers bequeathed little except depleted streams and debauched Indians. . . ." The negative influence offered by the trapper was to be a constant source of irritation for the missionaries soon to arrive.

The Hudson Bay Company began conducting business in the Flathead area by 1821, and soon many members of the tribe trapped and traded fur with them. This activity was a source of additional contact between outsiders and the natives. Alexander Ross, an employee of the company, traveled south through the Bitterroot Valley in the winter of 1824 with a hunting group. They spent several cold months trapping in 'the Valley of Trouble' which is now known as the sheltered valley at the head of the Bitterroot, or Ross' Hole. On his return trip north, very possibly in the vicinity of the future home of St. Mary's Mission, "members of the party . . . made a drum and . . . a fiddle, [and] the people were entertained with a concert of music." This scene demonstrates the profound influence that the music of the white man was to have on the Indian, his music, and culture.

In March of 1825, Ross reported that there were as many as twenty-five white persons wintering in Flathead House, a trading post north of the site that would be selected for St. Mary's Mission. Peter Skene Ogden replaced Ross shortly thereafter, and he had many contacts with the Flatheads. He noted that the immediate effect of fur trade activity was to improve the Indian's standard of
living. It also started a cultural exchange which came to influence the Indian and the music of the area.

A rendezvous site for fur trading with American companies was initiated in 1825 at what is now Green River, Wyoming, and the Flatheads took part in it from the beginning. They traveled to the site in large caravans and delighted in parading their horses through the white camps. "White trappers identified approaching Flathead at a distance by their tribal martial music, chromes [meter beats] chanted to drum beats."\(^{25}\)

Two incidents occurred which later came to foretell the appearance of the Jesuits and the continued receptive attitude toward Christianity among the Indians. One is the story of a young girl who had fallen ill and died. Just prior to her death, she had been baptized by one of the Christian Iroquois. Divinely inspired, she sang a canticle and then warned her people to, "listen to the the Black Robes when they come: they have the true power; do all they tell you. They are coming and will build the House of Prayer where I am dying."\(^{26}\) The other tells of a Salish man who, while mourning the death of his wife, was informed through a vision of the coming of the Black Robes. The way had been prepared for the appearance of the first Jesuits into the valley.
FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER II


2. George Catlin, Life Among the Indians (London: Gall & Inglis, reproduced by Xerox University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, 1976), p. 175.


15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.


19 Johnson, Flathead and Kootenay, p. 125.


CHAPTER III

THE COMING OF THE JESUITS AND THEIR MUSIC

Ignace, the Christian Iroquois Indian, had inspired the Flatheads to learn more of Christianity. They desired the power, which they believed was inherent in the faith, to help them hunt the buffalo and fight the Blackfeet. This quest brought civilized ideology and culture to the area, forever altering the Indian way of life.

Four Indian Requests for "Black Robes"

In 1831, the Indians sent the first of four delegations to St. Louis, the nearest Jesuit office, to ask for "black robes."* The delegation was met by General William Clark of the Lewis and Clark expedition who was familiar with the tribe because of his travels. He had passed the eventual home of St. Mary's twenty-six years earlier and met the Flatheads. Clark did what he could to help his friends.

The artist George Catlin met the first party on their return trip home by river steamer. He spoke with the three Indians and persuaded them to sit for a portrait. An

*The Indians used the term "black robe" to refer to the typical Jesuit Missionary by his distinctive attire.
account of the long journey for spiritual guidance was published in religious papers and created keen interest among several denominations. Shortly after 1831, the Protestants sent forth two missionaries who were never to reach the Flatheads. For reasons unknown, these Protestant Missionaries stopped short of or passed by the Flatheads and ministered instead to other tribes.¹

The Indians sent three subsequent parties to St. Louis petitioning for religious instruction in 1835, 1837, and 1839. Ignace himself, one of the first Christian Iroquois among the Flatheads, lost his life in the quest. Finally, the Flathead Indians "extracted a promise from Bishop Rosati to have a priest to live among them"² on the fourth and final trip.

DeSmet Enters with a New Culture; 1840

Bishop Rosati was the superior at the St. Louis Society of Jesus. He selected Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet to answer the call of the Flatheads. DeSmet was a capable and energetic young Belgian Jesuit priest working with the Potowatami Indians near what is now known as Council Bluffs, Iowa. In the summer of 1840, less than a year after the final Flathead delegation arrived in St. Louis, Father DeSmet met a Flathead committee, which he called "the elect of God,"³ at a previously mentioned Green River, Wyoming rendezvous. Here he "celebrated mass daily in the open air, and the Indians sang the hymns they knew."⁴ At
the closing of one day of his two-month stay with the Indians, two thousand assembled before his tent to recite their evening prayers, and "chant a solemn hymn, which they had themselves composed."\(^5\)

Father DeSmet returned to St. Louis in August of 1840 with the intent of obtaining more help. He saw how pre-disposed the Indians were to Catholicism and expected a quick and successful conversion. DeSmet wrote that the Indians were

> calling out, 'come over to us and help us'; and how many have in reality addressed this prayer to me . . . It would be impossible to do any solid and permanent good among these poor people, if they continue to roam about from place to place, to seek their daily subsistence. They must be assembled in villages - must be taught the art of agriculture.\(^6\)

Impressed by what the Indians believed to be the efficiency of Christian prayer as a supernatural aid in warfare and by certain prophetic incidents, they awaited further religious instruction.

In 1841, Fathers Mengarini and Point accompanied DeSmet's return to the Rocky Mountains with the assistance of three lay Brothers. Mengarini was Italian and Point was a Frenchman. During the treacherous journey, Mengarini was sometimes thrown off his mule, yet he would, "dazed and bruised, crawl out of the brush, still humming a tune from Palestrina."\(^7\) Crossing the rough terrain with the Fathers was an organ for the mission chapel, an instrument hauled by cart and mule from St. Louis.

DeSmet at times used a curious approach to attract
Indians around the campfire for religious instruction. He was an accomplished clarinetist and played his Belgium-made instrument to draw the interested natives to his side. The instrument was kept by Young Ignace's family for over a century and now is on display at the Museum of Native American Culture in Spokane, Washington.

DeSmet and his party met with the Flatheads in what is now known as Beaverhead County, Montana. The Indians received the Catholic Fathers with respect and gratitude. After remaining in camp for a few days, they divided with some lodges accompanying the missionaries to the Hell Gate Pass on September 9, 1841, and south into the Bitterroot Valley. The other Indians left for their annual buffalo hunt east of the Rocky Mountains, promising to be back to the Bitterroot Valley by the spring.

On the last day of their long trip, DeSmet and the party came upon a massive pile of rocks. Father DeSmet knew that "this is not material for a sculptor, sculpture is an art that can be measured. This is immeasurable—boundless. It is the stuff of music." The analogy between the Rocky Mountain vastness and music gives us insight into how he saw the world, often through the eyes of a musician. The size of this great new land and all of its challenges presented itself to these traveling men of God.
St. Mary's Beginnings

Arriving at the Bitterroot Valley on September 24, 1841, the missionaries cut down two trees, made a cross, and raised it to the chant of the "Vexilla Regis," an ancient Latin hymn meaning "The Banner of the King." The music of the white man was influential at this specific location from the beginning. They set to work to instruct the Indians and to erect a crude St. Mary's Church and settlement along the banks of the Bitterroot River. The buildings deemed most necessary at the outset were a church and a school for the children. DeSmet then announced "regulations respecting public worship, religious exercises, instructions, catechisms, singing, music, etc."^9

They constructed "with no other tools than the ax, saw and auger . . . a chapel with pediment, colonnade and gallery, balustrade, choir, seats, etc.,"^10 wrote DeSmet. The solemn dedication of the mission took place on the first Sunday of October when the church was officially placed under the special patronage of St. Mary.

Jesuit Missionaries were the first white men who intentionally altered the Flathead way of life, including their music. The missionaries intended to show the Indians the virtues of piety and toil, to teach them "not to pray only, but also to work, toil being next to godliness, and after piety, the best aid to good living for fallen man."^11

The priests encouraged the Indians to relinquish their migratory wanderings in favor of a more settled life, in
which agriculture would provide the means of survival. It meant the abandonment of the bison hunt, the armed conflict, and the rowdy behavior associated with it. Cultural practices including polygamy, divorce, and gambling were also to cease.

In place of these cultural traditions, the Fathers sought to have the Indians sing the holy word. The chapel organ which was brought overland was to accompany the singing and Gregorian chant. It was purchased in St. Louis and paid for with earrings and bracelets given by the generous ladies of New Orleans, Louisiana. DeSmet had been there raising funds for the new mission the year prior.

According to Desmet, the pipes of the organ were not in the usual upright configuration but rather situated horizontally on a table. Perhaps the crude chapel was not high enough to accommodate the pipes vertically, or that time had not allowed for their correct placement. In any case, an oil cloth served to cover them for protection, but visiting Nez Perces accidentally crushed the soft metal pipes by leaning on them just prior to the first baptism. These Nez Perce visitors had been placed in the choir gallery, where the pipes were located, so they could have a better view of the service.

In their anxiety to see what was going on, the one in front rested his arms on what seemed to be a table. Those behind rested their arms on the shoulders of those in front, and the organ pipes were crushed. Father Mengarini, being the celebrant at Mass, knew nothing of the accident until, going to play something on the organ for vespers, he found the damage which had unintentionally been done.
Another catastrophe which befell the developing mission was a fierce storm. Hurricane-force winds blasted through the community site, and much repair to the construction projects was in order. They worked at a rapid pace to prepare for the approaching baptism. Any number of other problems confronted them and though "all seemed to conspire against them . . . the day of baptism arrives and every cloud disappears."13

On December 3, 1841, less than three months since the mission origination, one third of the tribe was baptized into the Catholic faith. That same evening, "after the last instruction, prayers of thanksgiving were said for the favors received during the day, and although it was getting late, prayers continued to be said and hymns sung in every lodge."14

As promised in September, the group of Flatheads which had split with DeSmet's welcoming party to go on the winter buffalo hunt, arrived home. "At the approach of Easter the hunters returned to St. Mary's in time to join in the first singing of the Regina Coeli,"15 a song prayer in honor of the Blessed Mother performed during the Easter season. Father Point recorded, "One may judge how happy we were to hear this singing, which is in every respect so capable of gladening hearts."16

For a few seasons a priest accompanied the bison hunters across the mountains; thus their spiritual welfare was not neglected. The endeavor proved unsuccessful
because of the wild excitement practiced on these trips and the ill-will of tribal members towards the priest when he counseled leniency for prisoners of war. The custom of torturing enemies was obviously not condoned by the Fathers.

**Father Point and the Hunts**

Father Nicolas Point was a typical Jesuit Missionary: living with the Indians in their native habitat, sharing the discomfort and distress that were their daily bread, following them about in their seasonal hunts, and giving of himself to minister to their needs. The observations in his journal noted that "during the singing of hymns, all the voices did not always harmonize, but there was, nevertheless, always one heart and one soul in the three services held daily in the chapel." Father Point was a facile writer and possessed an artist's gift for portrayal with pen and ink.

In the spring of 1842, the successful planting and subsequent harvesting of grain and potatoes occurred. Yet the Indians' principal food was still buffalo meat which the Flatheads would go across the mountains to hunt twice each year. On the hunting plain, they "would chant songs of triumph, accompanied with the beating of drums; at each beat, they sent forth a wild and piercing shout; then followed the song, and so on alternately;--wild as the music was; it was not without harmony."
The dancing which followed was not the polka or waltz or anything resembling the dances of modern civilized life, as noted by Father DeSmet. The hunting excursion took the Indians away from mission life and much of the indoctrination. It became a problem which proved to be troublesome in their conversion. When the Flatheads were on the plains hunting for buffalo, they would also find their enemy, the Blackfeet.

The only native enemy of the Flatheads, the Blackfeet Indians, raided the hunters on the plains and then came into the Bitterroot Valley in small war parties to steal horses and kill if an opportunity offered itself. This led the Fathers to have a palisade built around the premises for protection, especially when all but the young and old left for the buffalo hunts.

Father Point braved the difficulties of a nomad's life and rigors of the season and found means to instruct and baptize a number of Indians during such a hunt. He traveled with the Indians on the winter hunt of 1842.

Point noted that "After prayers, there was singing before and after an instruction . . . and singing lessons." His spiritual guidance distinguished this hunt from others by the piety with which it was conducted. His personal strength was a determining factor in the behavior change.

On the first evening of the hunt, the chiefs gathered together and asked that the expedition be dedicated to
Mary. Accordingly, "Twice a day all would assemble for prayer, they would hear an instruction, preceded and followed by hymns." Then, they would rise and retire with recitations and group religious services.

The hunting party came upon a band of Pend Oreille Indians while on the journey. They met near the geographic location of Hell Gate (the present day east entrance into the Missoula Valley), named by the Flathead because of the numerous massacres inflicted upon them there by the Blackfeet. Contrary to Point's expectations, he found the differing chiefs' "hearts were not in harmony." The Feast of the Three Kings was approaching and Point worked for understanding among these Flatheads and Pend Oreilles. "With this end in view, couplets composed in honor of the new Magi were set to the most joyful music possible." It was useless, even "The Orphic lyre would have been impotent under these circumstances." The two tribes separated without battle, yet without friendship.

The Flatheads encountered a Blackfeet delegation several months later while hunting on the eastern plains. At the meeting, Father Point accompanied the respective chiefs in an agreeable meeting, followed by "Indian chants that could be heard coming from a dark defile whose entrance was lighted by the sun . . . [where] hands were shaken in sign of reconciliation, a dance was held, the calumet smoked . . ." Conversation and friendly relations occurred, situations that had not existed before
between these two warring tribes. Father Point's presence was a blessing.

While Point and DeSmet together accompanied the Indians on the summer hunt to the plains of 1843, the August Feast of Assumption was celebrated. Father DeSmet distributed Holy Communion to a great number of the faithful "during which the Holy Mass was sung." The day was spent joyfully in prayer, but as evening approached, the Flatheads exhibited sadness at DeSmet's impending departure for St. Louis.

Within several days of DeSmet's decampment, one of the new Indian converts died in the prime of his life. "The funeral was held with a certain amount of pomp, and the singing . . . and the cross erected over the remains appeared to leave a lively impression on the Indians." The service was a vast cultural diversion from the traditional way of honoring their dead. The typical practice of moving camp and not singing or dancing for four days was abandoned. The early assimilation pleased the Fathers greatly but led to conflicts between the Indians and the Fathers.

At a campsite the very next day, a party of Blackfeet, though hidden by a strip of thick woods, could be heard singing. Father Point described this as, "In the sharp yelping of the wolves and the low growls of their messmates, a musical ear could distinguish all degrees of sound, from bass to counter-tenor." Many observations of
life, both from the Fathers and from the Indians, contain musical terms to describe situations. This gives additional credence to the importance and concern that these people gave to the art of music.

Daily routines and rituals in the hunting camp were similar to life at St. Mary's. The morning prayers were "always followed by an instruction and singing." In that manner, Father Point worked to bring religious order to a sometimes heathen environment.

A number of Point's observations and illustrations were published. The art works with which Father Point embellished his literary study, Wilderness Kingdom, Indian Life in the Rocky Mountains: 1840-1847, range from sketches of Rocky Mountain fauna, flora, and Indian celebrities to portraits of traders and trappers. Father Point's observations of the Indian life which he worked so hard to enhance included mention of "the pious practice of saying the Angelus, reciting the Rosary, and singing canticles . . . throughout the camp." Many of Father Point's drawings depict Flathead religious life and contain a line from a hymn scrolled on the bottom edge of the work. Examples of these efforts are contained on the following pages. Figure 2 shows a painting of the first shrine erected among the Flathead in honor of Our Lady, adorned with the opening words of a well-known hymn "Hail, Queen of the Sea". The Holy Communion at St. Mary's on Pentecost Sunday, 1842, is
depicted in Figure 3 with the Latin hymn text "He Has Become the Food of the Wanderer." Finally, in Figure 4 is Father Point's painting of the first procession of the Blessed Sacrament which quoted a hymn usually sung during such a ceremony, "Praise the Saviour, O Sion".

Fig. 2. The first shrine erected among the Flathead Indians in honor of Our Lady. The Latin text translates to read "Hail, Queen of the Sea," the opening words of a hymn.
Fig. 3. Holy Communion of Pentecost Sunday, 1842, at St. Mary's Mission. The Latin words translate to read "He Has Become the Food of the Wanderer."
Fig. 4. The first procession of the Blessed Sacrament among the Flatheads at St. Mary's. The Latin words translate to read "Praise the Saviour, O Sion," which are from a hymn usually sung during such a ceremony.
Father Point's stay was brief at St. Mary's, and much of that time was spent on the hunts. He moved on in 1843 to minister to the Coeur d'Alene Indians some two hundred miles to the northwest. The art he brought to St. Mary's Mission and its people, especially its relevance to musical celebrations, had taken its place in history. For the edification of the people, then, and the glimpse into the past for us, Father Point earned himself an immortal position at St. Mary's.

Father Mengarini

As has already been determined, Father Mengarini traveled to the Rocky Mountains with DeSmet and Point in the summer of 1842. Mengarini offered much to the Flathead people while they continued to adopt many incongruous symbols of white civilization. Along with farming, formal school training commenced under his direction. The founding Father, DeSmet wrote:

A school has been commenced at which all the children attend during their stay at the village. One of the missionaries (Mengarini) having found excellent dispositions for music among the Flathead youth, has formed a musical band who play with great ease and harmony passages from the best composers.

By 1843 Father Mengarini had formed a military band among the Indian children, consisting of two clarinets, two accordions, three ottoviani (piccolo flutes), and three flutes. Mengarini wrote to the Father General in St. Louis requesting that he:
send some military instruments, trombone, some tympanies, etc., etc., with the orchestration for each instrument, and several pieces of music composed for this type of group. . . . It is incredible how the natives like music.

Father Mengarini was proud of his accomplishments with the group:

We played according to notes, for Indians have excellent eyes and ears, and our band, if weak in numbers, was certainly strong in lungs; such as had wind instruments spared neither contortions of the face nor exertions of their organs of respiration to give volume to music.

Mengarini, "a musician of no mean order," also taught the Flathead Indians traditional church hymns in Latin and adapted tribal chants to religious themes. "Three of the canticles I gave in Flathead, together with a Latin translation; the music of two of them I played myself composed for the Indians; the third I took from the French," Father Mengarini wrote. One of the funeral dirges sung yet, while carrying their dead to rest, is an old Indian song which "was set to music with Christian words by Father Mengarini."

The superior at St. Louis, Father Verhaegen, wrote to DeSmet his directions for forming a new mission in the Rocky Mountains just prior to their trip in the summer of 1841. He noted that Mengarini "has but little experience in the ministry and should be applied to the study of the language and remain, of course, as much as possible, at home." It is interesting to note Mengarini's vast musical contribution to the mission after glancing at that memorandum concerning him. Even so, the twenty-nine year
old sang hymns which told of the happiness of a Christian life and the joys of eternity, which "moved the Indians' hearts to thankfulness for the graces which God poured forth upon their tribe." The importance of his contribution cannot be denied.

In his own literary work, an invaluable document called a Narrative of the Rockies, Mengarini offers his explanation of the Flathead traditional pattern of musical life and composition. He noted that the Flatheads had their tribal and martial music, like any other tribe. However, by their music, they were recognized and distinguished from other tribes at a gathering. In addition, their music inspired in them incredible courage before battling their enemies. "This music is without words . . . with simple vowels . . . without formal metric structure, being instead composed of a series of chromes," though he in fact notated these examples in duple meter. As in his narrative, included here is an example recorded by Mengarini to present the reader with an accurate concept of music where each note is given an equal emphasis. The song was accompanied by a drum and is shown in Figure 5.

Fig. 5. Mengarini's Flathead Music Transcription
According to Mengarini, tribal music continued to be performed "But the Flatheads much prefer the music of the whites, though they possess no talent for vocal music." This comment indicates that the Father is very likely confused, because the vocal styles between the European and native American cultures were so diverse. Using a tight throat, the Indians' penetrating quality was produced in the upper nasal cavities, often labeled as the "clenched-teeth" style. The manner was so far removed from what he was accustomed to, that he apparently misjudged their technique for incompetent practice.

Mengarini continued:

Notwithstanding this, they become so enthusiastic after mastering some new little religious hymn that they repeatedly sing it, distorting it in such a manner that it is unrecognizable as they sing it at the top of their voices at least ten times a day.

Father Mengarini noted that some of the Flatheads were so enthusiastic to learn that after their daily schedule of morning prayer and Mass followed by instruction, a two o'clock afternoon catechism class, and more than an hour of evening instruction, they assembled in their own lodges to pray and sing hymns. He even joked "that some great-great-grandfather mosquito must, I think, have established a monastic order among them, for no . . . one could be more assiduous in choir duty than they were." DeSmet commented that "after prayers said in common, the Indians prayed and sang hymns in their homes; these pious exercises were prolonged often far into the night, and if awakening
during the night they began to pray.\textsuperscript{41}

In addition to vocal technique, the missionaries attempted to bring about profound modifications in common native life by abolishing certain economic and social practices and supplanting them with forms taken from European culture. The missionaries erected a school and taught the Indians how to read and write, to figure arithmetic, to sing, and, "of course, there was band practice."\textsuperscript{42} It is notable that a music education experience was included with the curriculum.

Yet some of the devotional life attempted assimilation using aspects of traditional Indian culture. Sermons followed Indian tastes in rhetoric, and hymns were built from traditional tribal songs. "Thus Mengarini turned a Flathead war song into a funeral hymn\textsuperscript{43} which is still in use by the Indians on the Kootenai-Flathead Reservation.\textsuperscript{44}

Christmas of 1844 was a significant day in the Rocky Mountains. There were more first communicants, and Father Mengarini administered the sacrament of communion to the entire tribe of Flatheads. In addition, "Twelve young Indians, taught by Mengarini, performed with accuracy several pieces of music by the best German and Italian composers during the midnight Mass."\textsuperscript{45} During the Easter service in the following season, Father DeSmet arrived in time to hear a choir of young Indian men, directed by Father Mengarini, sing several compositions of European derivation.
The Flatheads received the Jesuit's religious claims and rites, yet many could not assimilate Christianity completely in a few short years. Such restrictions as monogamy seemed to them unrealistic, nor could they give up their ancient hand games as easily as one would scratch out a phrase in a written law. The transformation which Mengarini sought was never completed.

The ten years Mengarini spent with these Indians were very significant, spiritually and musically. He has the distinction of directing the first musical band in the state, the spark which started this entire research project.

**Brother Specht**

Brother Joseph Specht came to St. Mary's Mission with Fathers DeSmet, Mengarini, and Point in that first permanent settlement in 1841. He spent more than forty years working among the Indians, helping the Fathers in missionary life, and performing general labor.

It is notable that during December of 1959, while demolishing the old Melvin Corwin house twenty miles south of St. Mary's, workmen found a hand-made violin between the walls. The instrument bore the carved inscription: "Made in February 1842 by Bro. Joseph Specht at St. Mary's Mission, Montana Territory." According to Father W. Schoenberg, S.J., the archivist at the Oregon Province for a number of years and the author of several books including
information about St. Mary's Mission of Montana, the violin had beautiful tone, though many of the accepted construction principles were violated. The unique instrument was donated to the Oregon Province Archives, the nearest Society of Jesus institution to St. Mary's, in June, 1960. It is currently housed in the Crosby Library of Gonzaga University, in Spokane, Washington.

Continued interest in the violin led to research by this investigator in the Oregon Province Archives, where there is an unpublished hand written note, dated June 4, 1962, by Father W. Schoenberg, S.J. The note states that the above named Mr. Corwin was later convicted of various crimes which casts some doubt on the authenticity of the violin. A son-in-law of Corwin, in fact, indicated that Corwin himself constructed as many as five violins from an old fence post! In Father Schoenberg's words: "At this point we are under no illusions, but have not definitely formed an opinion on the violin's authenticity." 47

Father Ravalli

The arrival of Father Ravalli at St. Mary's Mission in 1845 was both a boon and a blessing, as he was a student of medicine and could also minister to the health needs of the Indians. He was born in Ferrar, Italy, and could handle with skill the instruments of the artist as well as the tools and implements of almost every trade. He "found the mission a stimulating challenge to his talents as a doctor,
mechanic, musician and artist.\textsuperscript{48}

Ravalli had studied the arts and sciences in Rome and graduated as a doctor of medicine. In addition, he was enrolled in coursework in mechanical arts and learned to handle the plane, to lay brick and perform other masonry work. He learned to make and set a horse shoe, to dress wood and stone, and "besides all this he was an accomplished musician."\textsuperscript{49} His influence as an artist brought European culture directly to the isolated mission. Many of his fine works of art and sculpture are preserved in the present St. Mary's chapel.

Ravalli brought two small buhrstones with him from Europe which became a part of the first flour mill in Montana. He also oversaw the construction of the first lumber mill in the area. He was "a wonderful man, who died at the St. Mary's Mission . . . in 1884, in the 73rd year of his age . . . with the chisel of the sculptor and the brush of an artist."\textsuperscript{50} Ravalli gave of himself to the Indians and figures well into their history.

**Unsuccessful Cultural Assimilation**

Although many excellent and interesting events were transpiring at the mission, the Indians were experiencing some difficulty in the living the lives the Fathers deemed appropriate. The missionaries were unable to supply the tools and supplies necessary for a farming operation large enough to sustain Indian life. Hence, the uncivilized
buffalo hunts continued while the herds were quickly diminishing in numbers. Increasing contact with white people, some of whom lived lives far less exemplary than the Fathers, confused and enticed some members away from the faith. Many cultural differences existed which proved unresolvable.

Buffalo and beaver became every year more scarce and soon failed the Indians altogether as the immigrants traveled the Oregon Trail west. It was DeSmet's wish that the providence of God would come to the Indians' relief and that means would be found to procure implements and tools to settle them permanently at St. Mary's, the village they chose for their home.

DeSmet wrote from St. Mary's in August 1846 "Our hopes, then of seeing these poor Indians furnished with a plentiful supply of provisions, and their wandering habits thereby checked, will . . . be realized . . .." However, the Fathers saw that the dichotomy of cultural lifestyles continued to make complete conversion troublesome. DeSmet added, "To attain the desirable object of uniting them in villages, and thus forming them to habits of industry, we need, however, more means than we possess at present." The missionaries were unable to supply the Indians with everything to support life at the meager settlement, which necessitated the Indians' continued itinerant lifestyle.

In a letter to a charitable mission donator, Father
DeSmet disclosed his concern about the cultural dilemma. He saw two societies - one of the barbarian, and the other of the splendor of modern civilization - coming into conflict. "How many years will elapse before there will be a perfect fusion between the two societies, before unison will exist, before they can dwell together in complete harmony?" Using the language of the musician, he observed that cultural union was not to happen in his lifetime, or possibly ever.

When the Indians returned from hunting buffalo in the fall of 1846, the evil influence of the trappers became obvious. These wild and immoral trappers showed the Christian Flatheads the wicked aspects of Western culture, reminding the Indians how the Black Robes deprived the Indian from his former polygamous practices. The Indians began to witness the disparity between the belief and the practices of many whites.

Other possible explanations of the unrest at St. Mary's Mission include the lack of common sense with which Father Mengarini supervised the mission and the hectic recruiting and fund-raising schedule of DeSmet himself, the revered one who first brought orthodox Christianity to them. DeSmet's busy schedule kept the Indians severed from him for years at a time, which was a source of much displeasure to them.

DeSmet was also accused by Ravalli of having made promises of material items to the Flathead which he could
not deliver. It was symptomatic of the problem of obtaining supplies. Also important was that many of the Flatheads saw Christianity as having protective powers. When DeSmet left and foretold of the baptizing of their enemies, the Blackfeet, the Flatheads revolted. Why should their enemies, the Blackfeet, be given the same advantages which made the Flatheads now superior?

The relationship between the priests and Indians during these years was inconsistent. In 1848 they were on good terms. However, the influence of the outsider was to again take its toll. During the winter of 1848-49, a small party of whites on their way to Oregon spent the winter among the Flatheads. These whites led scandalous lives, demanded their livelihood from the poor Indians, and adversely influenced the younger members of the tribe.

Also, some French-Canadian trappers employed by the Missouri Fur Company camped near the mission and appeared on "New Year's Eve, clad in bison robes, painted like Indians, dancing La Gignolee to the music of tinkling bells fastened to their dress; for gifts of meat and drink."\textsuperscript{54}

When the missionaries protested, "These men retaliated by slandering the missionaries . . . and they succeeded in poisoning the minds of the Indians against the mission."\textsuperscript{55} The talk of the trappers against the missionaries continued to inflame the situation. The trappers were a licentious, roistering band with easy morals, consciences long since abandoned, who did not
hesitate to debauch the Indians, and who feared neither man nor devil.

At last, the Indians, when leaving the Bitterroot Valley on their summer buffalo hunt of 1850, left the Fathers without any protection. The situation led to the Blackfeet's murder of a half-breed boy who worked for the Fathers. In addition, "The apostasy of 1850 saw the Indians return to their 'orgy' and practiced customs which the Fathers expressly forbade."^56

The problems between the Flatheads and the Fathers was also a native revolt against the Jesuit regime and all its alien innovations. As a result of missionary zeal, "Flathead culture was threatened by a series of sweeping changes, changes sufficiently profound, if carried through, as to disrupt entirely the basic pattern of native life."^57 As substitutes for their own social techniques, practices, and music, the Indians were presented with unfamiliar and, for them, meaningless traits of European culture. "Unable to assimilate these foreign elements into their cultural background and faced with the loss of the former way of life, the Flathead rejected the entire missionary complex."^58

The priests insisted the traditional food quest be abandoned which meant that the ceremonial and musical practices intimately connected with it be dropped also. However, these observances closely connected with hunting, warfare, and other aspects of culture gave significance to
native life by providing means through which the social ideals of the Flathead could be expressed. Likewise, the Indians found agriculture, as introduced by the Jesuits, "lacked a body of ceremonial practices appropriate for the expression of these values."59

The traditional Flathead Guardian Spirit Dance and Winter Spirit Dance continued through every stage of Flathead history. Most Flatheads who had a guardian spirit or wished to be cured never entirely discarded their ancient concepts yet superimposed the Christian religion onto their own. The combination was not amalgamation, but supplementary and contradictory. Perhaps far too many contradictions existed for the Indians' preferred lifestyle.60

St. Mary's Mission Closes: 1850

In his frustration, Father Mengarini petitioned for the closing of the mission in the fall of 1850. On November 5, St. Mary's was abandoned and leased to Major John Owen, a sutler with an advance American military party in the area.* Owen built and ran a trading post for years named Fort Owen, which was located just north of the mission.

The Fathers' intention in leaving was to "punish [the Flathead] and bring them to a sense of duty,"61 according

*A sutler was a camp follower who peddled provisions to the soldiers.
to Father Mengarini. Father Ravalli moved the supplies, equipment, and church documents out of the Bitterroot Valley. During the move, all church records were lost in a raft accident near present day Thompson Falls.

Church records included baptisms, marriages, and deaths at St. Mary's Mission along with "house diaries" which contained pertinent daily information of mission life which would have been a rich source to the research community. Such records exist for the reactivated St. Mary's Mission, 1866-1891, (to be discussed hereafter) and are available in the Oregon Province Archives.

St. Mary's lay vacant for sixteen years. Father Mengarini, the musician, said from his death bed at Santa Clara College, California in 1866, "Often have I tried to get back, but without success; yet, though constrained by obedience to be separated in body, my love goes back, and will ever go back to the joys, sorrows, and trials of my dear Flathead mission."
FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER III


8 Ibid., p. 42.

9 Chittenden & Richardson, Life of De Smet, S.J., 1:40.


11 John Fahey, The Flathead Indians, p. 64.

12 Lucylle H. Evans, St. Mary's in the Rocky Mountains (Stevensville, MT: Montana Creative Consultants, 1976), p. 55.

13 Chittenden & Richardson, Life of De Smet, S.J., 1:40.

15 Evans, *St. Mary's in the Rocky Mountains*, p. 65.


18 Ibid., p. 336.

19 Ibid., p. 147.

20 Ibid., p. 43.

21 Ibid., p. 150.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., p. 158.

24 Ibid., p. 167.

25 Ibid., p. 170.

26 Ibid., p. 171.

27 Ibid., p. 181.

28 Ibid., p. 413.


36 Evans, St. Mary's in the Rocky Mountains, p. 54.


38 Ibid., p. 275.

39 Ibid., p. 276.

40 Ibid., p. 115.


43 Idem, St. Mary's in the Rocky Mountains, p. 55.

44 Idem, Good Samaritan of the Northwest, p. 72.

45 Chittenden & Richardson, Life of De Smet, S.J., 1:471.

46 Schoenberg, Jesuits in Montana, p. 18.

47 W. Schoenberg, S.J., "Regarding The Violin," memorandum contained in the St. Mary's file of the Oregon Province Archives, Spokane, WA.


49 "St. Mary's Centenary," Spokane (WA) Spokesman Review, 12 January 1936, contained in the St. Mary's Centenary file of the Oregon Province Archives, Spokane, WA.

50 Peter Ronan, History of the Flathead Indians (Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, 1890), p. 33.

51 de Smet, Oregon Missions, p. 307.

52 Ibid.

53 Chittenden & Richardson, Life of De Smet, S.J., 1:1197.


58 Ibid.

59 Ibid., p. 243.


62 Partoll, Mengarini's Narrative, p. 20.
CHAPTER IV

THE ST. MARY'S MUSICAL COMMUNITY EXPANDS

Even as the missionaries were leaving, the complexion of the St. Mary's community was beginning to change. John Owen had begun a trading post on the site of the old mission which drew customers to the area. After a few years, the town of Stevensville was platted, and a small commercial area grew to serve the citizens. Soon the mission was reactivated and, with the growing importance of nearby Missoula, Fort Owen fell by the wayside. At the same time, the Flathead Indians were forced out of the valley by increasing numbers of white farmers, the mission closed permanently, and Stevensville was to endure alone.

Fort Owen - The Hub of Civilization: 1850's

Major John Owen and his trading post, Fort Owen, figured predominantly in the history of St. Mary's and the surrounding community. This influence continued from his purchase of the old mission for 250 dollars in the fall of 1850, until his removal to a sanitarium in Helena in 1871. A colorful man with a taste for good books, music, and whiskey, he kept a daily diary and a business ledger which describes and explains many of the events occurring in the
remote region.* John Owen's title as major was not of military origin, yet rather a social amenity of running a mercantile. As previously noted, he had been a sutler, which was merely a camp follower who peddled provisions to the soldiers, but now served as a public merchant.

As there were few other trading posts in the vast area, Fort Owen, with continual improvements and additions, was an imposing edifice with a strategic location for trade. The owner's hospitality and fairness also attracted trade.

The old fort was the center of many pioneer festivities, and Major Owen was seldom without at least one guest. The three principal occasions for celebration during the year were Christmas, New Year's Day, and The Fourth of July. Usually a salute fired from the Fort's howitzer ushered in each of these three holidays. At the beginning of his tenure, though, Major Owen found many of the same problems as had the missionaries.

Lieutenant John Mullan, the road builder associated with Governor Isaac Stevens, for whom Stevensville, Montana, the home of St. Mary's was named, visited the Bitterroot Valley in November 1853. Owen had packed and started to leave the region because the Blackfeet Indians often raided the fort. Mullan's appearance with his few

*Even though his unconventional writing style is very disjunct, the information it contains is invaluable to this study, and quoted often in the text. It is full of misspelled words, personal shorthand, abbreviations, and overused capitalization.
troops convinced Owen to stay. The now remorseful Flatheads petitioned Mullan to again secure "Black Robes." This request was not immediately acted upon.

At that point, a delegation of Indians traveled to California in an effort to beg Father Mengarini to return, but his health was too poor and he declined. Eventually, other Jesuit Missionaries visited the old mission site. The first call was on November 30, 1854, when Father Hoecken arrived from the St. Ignatius Mission some sixty miles to the north.

Major Owen became the third official Indian agent to the Flatheads in as many years. Representing the Indians to a government which was often unsympathetic to their concerns was a difficult position. He took over the duties of Indian agent in 1856 and had their best interests at heart. In a letter to the Indian Department he wrote: "They are Indians, it is true, but at the same time they are human beings." Married himself to an Indian woman, he had a profound influence on the history of the St. Mary's community.

The early pioneer judge, Frank H. Woody, traveled through the Bitterroot in 1856 and noted that Fort Owen was "One of the only places where buildings had been erected and were occupied by white people within the limits of the present State of Montana." Major Owen was the steward of civilization in this remote area. Daily papers and telegraphic dispatches from around the world did not exist
at the fort. The pioneers considered themselves fortunate if they "got one or two weekly Oregon papers in six months; Eastern papers we never saw." Judge Woody lamented his "isolated condition; The Presidential election was held in November, 1856, but we knew nothing of the result until about the middle of April, 1857!"³

Lieutenant James H. Bradley was familiar with the fort as a result of military maneuvers conducted in the region. One of the many eventually killed in the battle with Chief Joseph at Big Hole, Bradley kept a diary which contained information about the kind of life existing at the time in St. Mary's vicinity:

There was nothing within the limits of what is now Montana that could be termed a settlement, its few white inhabitants being of that zealous and adventurous sort who precede civilization as missionaries, hunters, trappers, traders and idlers in Indian camps. A Mr. John Owen had a trading post in the Bitter Root valley, called after himself Fort Owen.

Fort Owen was the "civilization" that early traveler Charles W. Frush described when entering the area. He had traveled from the Dalles area of Oregon, in the spring of 1858 and wrote, "Our last day's march brought us to the long looked for haven... those old adobe walls and buildings."⁵

A second visit of the Jesuit Fathers from the St. Ignatius Mission to St. Mary's lasted for twelve days when Father Joseph Menetrey stayed with the Flatheads in July 1857. He returned again in early August. Some three hundred Indians returned to the Sacraments and twenty
marriages were blessed during these two trips. Father Menetrey wrote "I left camp in the best of dispositions just as it was about to break up for the buffalo hunt. It had quite another aspect now... No longer did one hear there the noise of the gaming table or the drum." The Indians indeed desired religious leadership and were making an attempt to exhibit a willingness to return to more acceptable ways.

Also in 1857, after one of his employees was murdered by Blackfeet Indians, John Owen replaced his old palisade fort with adobe walls eighteen feet high and two feet thick. The structure was of formidable size and large enough to accommodate 150 men with ample room for celebrations. The "Patriarch of the Valley" had built himself a safe haven at last and hired P. MacDonald to teach the Indian and half-breed children living around Fort Owen. The school was another generous gift from John Owen who showed his concern for the well-being of the children. Music might well have been studied during some of these sessions, but there is no information available to verify such a claim. In any case, Mr. MacDonald left the school at the end of the term, having earned some thirty dollars per month for his services.

Even Father DeSmet made a special visit to his "home," that of St. Mary's Mission in the Bitterroot Valley, during the Fort Owen era. On March 18, 1858, traveling through deep spring snow, "With tears welling in his eyes, [he]
stopped before the door of the church he had built at St. Mary's . . . the Flatheads . . . threw their arms about him, weeping in their joy at seeing him again." The gentle people had not forgotten him. During the eight years the mission had remained closed, many had continued to assemble periodically in order to say the prayers and sing the songs he had taught them. Yet, after several days, DeSmet was forced by duty to travel to the St. Ignatius Mission for a council of chiefs, two days ride to the north.

The government had promised to build a school for the Indians in the community. When Congress finally ratified the treaty in 1860, Owen's supervisor informed him that "In regard to the erection of buildings for the schools and the employment of teachers therefor . . . I have to advise that you postpone action for the present." Construction of the school was never even started. The only schools to exist were the ones the Fort Owen community instituted itself, which were followed by early settler schools.

Music, Celebration, and Activity Abound: Early 1860's

Fort Owen served as the nucleus for most social situations in the region. Major Owen enjoyed music, both as a consumer and performer, and cultivated musical growth for everyone's benefit. Music was present in informal concerts, parties, and celebrations surrounding special events and holidays.
The 1860 Christmas season was a celebrated one at Fort Owen. "The Christmas Week has passed and We wind up the holidays with a party to Night." Owen's lengthy journal entry continues: "In fact it has been Nothing but dancing & feasting for the last past ten nights." One continuous round of feasting and dancing lasted from Christmas until January 2. The probable reason for the extended fete was that the settlements were so far apart and travel so difficult in winter that the settlers evidently decided to make their celebrations last long enough to be worth while.

During the week-long celebration, a specific musician made a positive impression on John Owen. "The one armed fiddler Much amused . . . the Ladies." Major Owen noted that, "Through the ramifications of the dance he moved the light fantastic toe." The one-armed fiddler is referred to several more times in Owen's journal entries. Then on January 12, not yet two weeks from the last party, "Last Night quite a jubilee The one Armed fiddler took to himself a Native bride. Gave him a shiveree." Three days later, "The one armed fiddler report says having gone to see his uncle." The next four lines in Owen's journal are illegible. Possibly the whereabouts of the one-armed fiddler are hidden there, for there are no further entries concerning him.

The winter of 1860-61 was yet another busy time at the fort. On Friday evening, February 22, 1861, a party occurred. Visitors traveled from Hell Gate (the town which
later was to become Missoula) and with the rooms decorated with engravings and lithographs of former President Washington, "The young girls are in fine Spirits. They danced last Night . . . The party went off last night well . . . The girls danced Nearly all Night." The band providing the dance music must have been spirited indeed!

During the cold months of these celebrations, the school was reorganized at the fort. A Mr. Robinson began the school term, though his stay there did not last long. By February 28, only a few weeks into the term, Major Owen noted that "Robinson the schoolmaster was Yesterday Morning Set adrift for taking improper liberties with the little daughter of Mr. Harris." The school continued for several years, though it was never in session for more than a few months at a time. If any type of musical instruction was offered, the available sources cannot substantiate it.

Festive musical celebrations of another kind transpired at the fort after the Flatheads had a victorious meeting with their enemies, the Blackfeet, in the spring of that year. On May 27, 1861, Owen indicated in his log that "The Indans [sic] had a great Dance over the Scalps of their Enemies &c." Once again, the lack of the Jesuits' spiritual guidance was certainly apparent.

With increasing exploration, many people came to the area. Louis Maillet was one of these pioneers who later became a merchant in Stevensville. He visited Fort Owen in 1862 and noted the first wedding between white people in
the region. "Everybody got drunk and just before supper Blake stole the wedding cake. After a short dance the happy couple retired, the men all wishing there were brides enough to go round." In addition, the valley became a thoroughfare for people traveling to and from the Salmon River mines.

Major/Indian Agent Owen continued to fight for the Indians by purchasing supplies for them out of his own pocket and working for no salary. Finally, tiring of filing complaints to his superiors concerning matters which were never rectified and probably realizing the continuance of such complaints was futile, he resigned his official role in October of 1862. In appreciation for all he had done for them, the Flathead Indians honored him. Owen noted in his journal that he "had quite a reception from the Flathead Indians which wound up in a grand Dance & talk." Two days later, "The Indians paid . . . another visit in full costume & had a grand dance & pow wow." Owen stayed at the fort and continued his work as a merchant even though he was no longer an Indian Agent. From 1862 on, the Indian Department of The United States Government has had no official representative in the Bitterroot Valley.

On November 16, 1862, a musical facet of Major Owen himself is found in his log. "The mail contained but little of importance save that the Col'd Cook . . . requested that the Major (Myself) would loan him his Guitar
& send him a few strings." The next day's log continued: "In reply to the Mail of Yesterday I had to decline the loan of my guitar inasmuch as it was Necessary for Me to furnish Strings. We propose having a dance on Christmas when Strings will be in demand." Presumably, the strings were either hand-made or transported at considerable cost and time from more civilized territory.

There was indeed a Christmas celebration at the fort that year. The Christmas entry noted a fine dinner and that the day "wound up with a dance." Presumably, Major Owen provided some of the music himself, utilizing his own guitar as the principal instrument.

With another busy holiday season imminent, the citizens of Fort Owen decided on a grand festivity for New Year's Day, 1863. Specially written invitations for a New Year's Eve ball were distributed around the area. The notes were enclosed in handsome envelopes, yet evidently the message was unclear, for some of the guests arrived a day late. So that they might not be disappointed, another party was prepared! Paper collars which sold at thirteen cents each were available for purchase at the fort, and "whenever a dance was being scheduled, the sale of these articles greatly increased"! Guests came from a radius of seventy miles. And the following year, as was tradition, another dance on New Year's Eve took place.
Expanding Population and Development: Mid 1860's

In 1864, the town of Stevensville was officially platted, and Montana became a territory. The Bitterroot Valley was one of the first locations discovered by the new immigrants. Many whites encroached on Indian land and settled where they pleased, although Montana was not to be officially and legally opened for settlement until 1871. Unimpeded by the Flathead or their Indian agents, illegal homesteaders had been arriving in the Bitterroot since 1855. Now, the number increased dramatically.

Settler farms covered thirty miles up and down the valley. Whites in western Montana by 1865 numbered perhaps seven hundred; their farms totaled fifteen thousand acres; and forty homes stood near Fort Owen in a hamlet called Stevensville. Four pianos had been imported into the state, though exact locations are not known. Civilization moved forward.

The discovery of gold also began to draw settlers to the region. Father DeSmet admitted by the mid-1840's knowing of its presence: "I have known of the existence of the precious metals in this region for many years... Poor unfortunate Indians! they trample on treasures unconscious of their worth." His secret kept the miners at bay for a number of years. Even after John Owen had written in his diary for February, 1852, "Sunday, 15 - Gold Hunting found some," the insurgence was delayed.
In the fall of 1865, John Owen completed a significant undertaking. His grain mill had been finally finished at a cost of $20,000. The resulting financial debt led partially to his eventual demise. However, preparations were made for a party in celebration of its completion. From his journal entries, it is seen that Owen had "had His Ball room floor done and . . . [that] the party passed off well." The band included "a few Gent's With violins - guitar - & Banjo - [which] Started on a Seranada Which all lovers of Music could not help but Enjoy." Major Owen spent part of the evening with a Mrs. Sinclair, who was "Naturaly fond of Music." Together, they danced and "had frequent Waltzes."26

In September of 1866, another musician stopped at the fort long enough to share his music with the community. Major Owen stated in his journal that "Wash Harris called & passed the Evening Had his banjo with him which he plays very well. He Sang and accompanied himself on the Banjo Several New & good Songs."27 Major John Owen proved to be a musician, dancer, and self-proclaimed frontier critic.

The Mission Joins the Fort and Town: Late 1860's

Also in September 1866, Father Giorda, as his last act as Superior of the Oregon Province of The Society of Jesus, returned to re-establish St. Mary's Mission. He and Brother Claessens found the mission in ruins and built an entirely new chapel. As weather permitted, living quarters
were constructed and attached to the new structure. Major Owen recorded in his journal that "The Jesuit Fathers are putting up a Chapel near here for the use of Inds. and others who desire to hear divine service."  

Gradually mission life took up where it had left off sixteen years before. On October 28, 1866, Giorda presided over the simple dedication ceremonies. Owen himself "Witnessed [the] dedication of the New Chapel and the Solemn Ceremony of the Elevation of the Host." Father Ravalli also returned to "dear old St. Mary's" several years later and lived out his long life there.

The proximity of Fort Owen to the mission provided a social and cultural bond which was advantageous to all parties. The influence made inseparable the lives of people connected with either of these two settlements or with the new town of Stevensville. On a typical Sunday, John Owen would walk up to the mission to share a cup of coffee with Father Ravalli, while the Father obliged with a return trip on Monday to bring fresh vegetables and pleasant conversation.

One of the most important musical events is described in the Tuesday, February 19, 1867 journal entry of Major John Owen. In the midst of the ice cutting and trout catching activities surrounding the fort, a long entry was made concerning a musical event the previous evening:

Last Night We were very agreeably surprised & Entertained by a Visit from the Stevensville Band. The Band is composed of two violins - two guitars - one Banjo - Bones - triangle &c They Make Very fair Music.
Two of the instruments - I Violin & I guitar Were Made by Mr. Ralls & they Sound Very Well. Quite a production for a Bitter root Village - They gave us Songs - Railroad overture & jeber [jubilee] All of which we Enjoyed hugely.

The remarkable craftsman who made the two musical instruments was actually J.J. Roll. He had also manufactured fanning mills and a bed for John Owen. Roll lived at the fort in 1866 and then moved to Stevensville to become a fairly permanent resident as indicated by the Fort Owen Ledger, a record of all fort business transactions. Roll's ingenuity helped perpetuate the heritage of a band in the community surrounding St. Mary's Mission. From that group of young Indian boys some quarter of a century earlier, bands continued to color the history of the area.

Travel up and down the valley became easier and amateur musicians abounded at the Major's hospitable door. A "Mrs Devenpeck & husband passed the Evening with us on yesterday and Entertained us with Some church Music." On another occasion the major "Spent a very pleasant Eving With Mr McDonald & Daughter. Maj. Graham gave us a few Choice Songs."

A vibrant musical atmosphere existed at the fort. In a hostile and untamed land, performers and audiences seemed to thrive. As an example; "Last Night had a Serenade Banjo & Guitar," Owen penned in his journal. The stage ride was only one day from Hell Gate to Stevensville, and a post office had been established at the fort in 1868. Indeed a potentially rich cultural community was growing up around
St. Mary's.

John Owen's nephew also contributed to the musical life of the community. Horace P. Fry was mentioned in many separate journal entries which boast of Fry's contribution: "Dr. Baker up from Missoula. Horace favor'd us this Evening with a favorite air accompanied by his Guitar," and Horace was "at a party in town last night making his tri & semi daily trips to Town." It seemed that Horace spent much of his time in Stevensville and between trips "amuses himself in his room with Guitar. Uncle Owen perceived Horace's musical existence as a "'Gay & Easy Life' [with] 'No Cares Whatever.'"

This guitarist and entertainer was building a reputation for himself. Horace and several friends put together a band for the accompaniment of dancing, and Owen said that they were "the Minstrels of the Vally . . . had their Services placed under contribution last Night by One Mr. Thos. B. Rollins who gave to the Dancing & party going people a little set to at his house. All gay & lovely." It was simply a "band for hire" which played an important part in Stevensville's early music history. Little doubt he played for the "Dance to Night at Mr Dobbins" referred to by his uncle on January 27, 1868. Horace left the fort and was in Helena within the year. Available information does not trace his further activities.

After Father Giorda left St. Mary's in 1869, another influential Montana Jesuit eventually arrived: Father
Jerome D'Aste. He had been studying higher mathematics in Paris when Father DeSmet addressed the Jesuit community there and successfully recruited D'Aste into Indian mission work. Before coming to St. Mary's, he served the order in Helena, Montana.

Mrs. Peter Ronan, a colorfully articulate pioneer woman, made some notable comments regarding Father D'Aste. As a small girl in the early 1860's, Mrs. Ronan first became acquainted with Father D'Aste who was then ministering and conducting in Helena: "I was a member of the Last Chance mission choir, an organization in which Father d'Aste took great delight in." As shown by his choir directorship, St. Mary's Mission was thus blessed with another musically interested Father.

An Italian of slight build and red hair, he spent his life in Indian service. According to Mrs. Ronan, Father D'Aste was always frail, but he never failed to answer a call from one in distress, no matter how greatly he needed strength. He was a very close friend of the Indians, and especially of Chief Charlot, who was in control at the end of St. Mary's days. His most remarkable act was accomplished in 1877, when Chief Joseph's forces passed through the Bitterroot Valley enroute to Canada; it was Father D'Aste who convinced the Flatheads to remain neutral, and thus much bloodshed was avoided.

Father D'Aste kept a diary in which brief items of mission news were frugally preserved. These thirteen
little address books, of which the first five are within the time frame of this work, are full of daily weather reports, records of activities, and basic mission life. They are continuously dated from July 17, 1878 until his death on November 10, 1910, with the last entry written by the Brother who discovered his body. The diaries were found in the original form at the Oregon Province Archives and have never been published. He wrote in a graceful manner, calmly detached from the lively events transpiring around him. A few musical events found their way into his diaries, and some events are recounted herein.43

Father D'Aste was at St. Mary's Mission during the final and waning years of the second epoch. Some of the Indians moved north sixty miles to the Jocko Reservation where an Agent offered federal representation. The Jocko River runs through the Jocko Reservation and was named for Jacques Finley, a half-breed trapper and explorer who worked for the the Northwest and Hudson's Bay Fur Companies in the area. It was originally called Jacque's, but later the name was changed to Jocko. The mission population dwindled significantly, and D'Aste dealt with the failing morale of the individuals remaining. His unique optimism colored these journal entries with a sense of pride and realism.

As early as 1869, a public school was established in Stevensville. During the same time, The United States Government officially initiated steps to remove the
Flathead people from their home. Promises of retribution and threats of violence frightened some of the Indians from the Bitterroot Valley. This was the beginning of a long and cruel struggle for the natives.

The town of Stevensville was now becoming the hub of activity for the community, supplanting the roles of St. Mary's Mission and Fort Owen. Even the dances, which had usually taken place at the fort, were now recorded by John Owen as "a Ball in Stevensville" for the 1870 New Year's Eve celebration.

**The Fort Declines and Stevensville Grows: 1870's & 80's**

Burdened with a grist mill that was too large for available local growers to adequately utilize, competition from merchants in the nearby settlement of Missoula which was located on the new immigrant route of Mullan Road, the passing of his wife, and a long bout with alcohol abuse, John Owen went bankrupt in 1871. He was soon institutionalized in a Helena sanitarium and died. John Owen's lively contributions to this Bitterroot Valley music history are notable and many examples have been found within. The fort was sold by auction to Washington J. McCormick, Esq., and no longer figured significantly in the lives of the people around St. Mary's.

The white Stevensville immigrants made it known that they were now in charge and that Stevensville was going to be a white community. Some Indian families felt the
economic and political pressures and began to move north to the Jocko Reservation during the summer of 1873. The federal government had chosen the Jocko Reservation for the Flathead as their new home away from the Bitterroot. These native people started their trek group by group, a move which would take eighteen years to complete.

A mission church was built on the Jocko Reservation to attract the Indians north. When the cornerstone of the St. Ignatius Church was laid, Archbishop Seghers commented that "The faith and fervor of these Indians is really wonderful, but their singing is bad, fearful, horrible; loud yells without audible pronunciation!" The account sounds very similar to Father Mengarini's comments years prior concerning the Indians lack of talent for vocal music. The Indians saw more and more settlers overrunning their lands and found it much harder to sustain their own living since the buffalo herds' eradication by the white man. St. Ignatius had an advantage over St. Mary's that tended to bind the Indians permanently to the community, and that was its schools.

At the same time, other religious faiths commenced services in the Bitterroot Valley. The Episcopal Church arrived in Montana Territory by way of Virginia City. In 1871, Bishop Daniel S. Tuttle held a service at the Bass Ranch (just two miles north of Stevensville) amidst growing fruit trees. The religious ceremony was blessed with an "improvised choir [which] consisted of the Sherrif of the
county . . . with a bass viol, and the German brewer with a violin, and two young men singers.46

Church life frequently enhances the culture of an area, and the Protestant church certainly must have added to the musical vibrancy of the St. Mary's community. It was also during the 1870's, and lasting through the 1890's, that The Montana Christian Association held services in Stevensville conducted by ordained ministers. The Methodist-Episcopal and Presbyterian faiths also soon arrived, and the Secret Society lodges like the Free Masons initiated members. A farmer's union called the Grange began, and other social organizations added to the religious/social/cultural life of the community.

Musical life in nearby Missoula was active and deserves an aside here. A chronology was prepared by historian Chauncey Barbour before the turn of the century, and in his papers he recounts that in 1874, "The blowhards of Missoula organized a brass band, but it does not appear to have been in full blast until the next season."47

From the Woodstock Letters, a record of events published by the Society of Jesus, Father D'Aste wrote in a letter dated December 30, 1878 that "We had a very nice celebration on Christmas night."48 Father D'Aste noted in his diary that most of the Indians had gone after the buffalo in mid-December; however, thirty families came to confession and services.49

By 1878, the Indians were strewn throughout the
Stevensville area. At Christmas and Easter, "The Indians would gather around the Mission" and be present for the religious celebrations. Soon afterward, they would "scatter again" back to their homes. There is no specific reference to music here, but church holiday services likely contained musical contributions of some sort.

In 1884, the federal government conducted a thorough census and found the Bitterroot Valley to have only 342 Flathead individuals, most of them existing in poverty. Father D'Aste wrote in a personal letter dated December 29, 1884, that

> It was a pitiful sight to see the poor women going, during the coldest weather . . . trying to keep up their supply of firewood . . . in order to prevent their families, living in cotton lodges, from freezing at night . . . I am afraid that plenty of suffering is in it for them.

In that same year, the friend of the Flatheads, Father Anthony Ravalli died. He had served St. Mary's in the beginning, and continuously since 1863. Because Father Ravalli was a favorite son of Stevensville, the flag flew at half mast over the post office in remembrance of his fifty years of mission service. His remains were buried in the small cemetery at St. Mary's.

1884 was a busy year in Stevensville. An "elegant two-story frame school-house, which speaks loudly in favor of western progressiveness" was constructed. It was the first permanent school building in the region and functions yet as the United Methodist Church.
Placed between the front cover and first page of Father D'Aste's diary, dated from April 1, 1885 to December 31, 1889, was an advertisement for an organ. With this clipping from an unidentified newspaper advertisement, was a coupon to purchase the instrument with 27 stops for just $75. The coupon warned the consumer that in no case should one wait to place the order later than ten days from the date of the coupon. The coupon was dated September 14, 1882, and found in D'Aste's diary commencing in 1885. Possibly the item was misplaced in his journal by three years or the mail delivery was extremely slow during the waning years of St. Mary's Mission. In any case, it indicates that the good Father was planning to update the chapel organ.

In 1888, the residence of St. Mary's was moved to Missoula. It was decided that with so few Flatheads in the St. Mary's area a priest could be better utilized in the booming town of Missoula. St. Mary's Mission remained open with a Brother staying there for guardianship. The last remaining Father of St. Mary's, D'Aste, lived in the Missoula residence and visited the Indians in Stevensville usually over the Sabbath.

The Flatheads Are Forced Out and Stevensville Dominates: 1890's

On Saturday, November 2, 1889 Chief Charlot signed the agreement for the Flathead Indians to leave the Bitterroot Valley. After the signing, the citizens of Stevensville
provided a banquet and a ball for the Indians in the high school building, and Charlot was requested to sit in the place of honor. It would take two years for the move to be completed. The fort and mission, having served as the hub of activity for the St. Mary's community, yielded to the town of Stevensville itself.

Local Stevensville talent often presented musical entertainment in concert. An instrumental and vocal concert with an admission of seventy-five cents per couple was held at the Baptist Church on April 25, 1891, by W.P. Hershey's singing class. "The class has been practicing for some time and a rare treat is anticipated." A complete program of the concert was printed in the *Northwest Tribune*, published in Stevensville, on April 24, 1891.

On the same evening, the "Original Colored Georgia Minstrel" presented a show at Buck's Hall. Mr. Buck owned a mercantile in Stevensville, and his stock room was a practical place for gatherings. The *Northwest Tribune* reporter wrote that "The singing and dancing is the best he ever heard" and "to look out for the Street Parade, headed by two drum majors." Reviews of both the singing class and minstrel programs appeared in the next week's *Northwest Tribune*, noting fine performances by each group.

When the Stevensville Grade School dismissed after the school year 1890-91, the closing exercises were held at Buck's Hall and a large audience witnessed the performance.
The program was "very well executed and showed no lack of drill upon the part of the teachers and pupils." Quite a number of vocal renditions were offered by soloists and large class ensembles.

The Central Alliance, a civic group of Stevensville residents, held a Fourth of July Celebration in 1891. Two separate committees were responsible for musical entertainment and dance music. The event was held at Willow Grove, one mile east of Stevensville at 10 o'clock in the morning. No intoxicating liquors were allowed on the picnic grounds. A cordial invitation was extended to all people to enjoy, among other items, vocal and instrumental music performances and dancing. Among the musicians for the dance was George Strout, who traveled from the Curlew Mine, a silver mine near Victor, fifteen miles away.

Musical life in the community must have been thriving, for the N.B. Donley Music Emporium of Missoula arranged for a large weekly advertisement in Stevensville's Northwest Tribune. Pianos, organs, and other musical instruments were available along with accessories and sheet music, music books and folios. The advertising commenced on June 26, 1891, and continued for several months.

The Smith dance band furnished music throughout the valley. The Tribune editor told of the fine dancing and splendid suppers available for the fair price of two dollars and fifty cents per couple. In one month,
September 1891, the group played in three locations and ended the tour with a finale in Stevensville.

At this time, a number of visiting musicians came to the area and organized music classes. The teaching of piano, strings, voice, and other instruments was regularly announced in the paper. The white man and his music were present and strong, while the Indians and their music were slowly moving north.

_**St. Mary's Mission Closes for a Final Time: 1891**_

"On October 17, 1891, the Flatheads, after a bitterly long struggle, finally yielded to the whites and gave up their ancestral home in the Bitter Root Valley". The _Northwest Tribune_ reported that General Carrington, the officer in charge of the relocation "out-generals them all . . . many unsuccessful attempts have been made to remove them . . . we are proud to say he has stood the test and done his work like a man." \(^{58}\)

On the official day of their removal, a large social dance was held at which Will Silverthorn played the fiddle. Almost one hundred people enjoyed the supper and ball. \(^ {59} \) The white town celebrated the removal of the Indians to the Jocko Reservation, some sixty miles to the north.

The Benediction of the final Most Holy Sacrament took place at St. Mary's just prior to the Indians' departure. The Indians sang the ancient hymns "O salutaris" and "Tantum ergo," which referred to the perseverance and
difficult times that must be embraced. These chants told better than any other words could, of the patient teachings of the Jesuit Fathers. A visiting Father observed that the Indian's singing was lovely, where "Every word of the beautiful Latin verses sounded as distinct as if coming from cultivated voices." The event noted the termination of St. Mary's as the Flathead mission, on the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation.

The older Indians rode out of the valley in a Missoula and Bitter Root Valley Railroad Company train car. The others followed in wagons and on ponies as St. Mary's ceased to be a mission of consequence. Since the Indians were no longer in the valley, St. Mary's was classified as a mission extension from Missoula, and Jesuits traveled there on weekends to provide Mass for a handful of whites.

Beyond a doubt, the missionaries at St. Mary's brought with them the leaven of gentleness into a savage land. Their influence restrained immorality and crime in the Indians and all others who encountered them. The simple mission began a community which developed a rich culture through the years. Fort Owen was indispensible for these people until the thriving town of Stevensville dominated the region with its increasing population. The St. Mary's community had practiced and performed music as an integral part of everyday life.
FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER IV


11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., p. 230.

14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., p. 233.
16 Ibid., p. 249.
17 Ibid., p. 254.
20 Ibid., p. 263.
21 Ibid., p. 265.
22 Reynolds, "Some Chapters in History," p. 98.
25 Ibid., p. 63.
27 Ibid., p. 29.
28 Ibid., p. 31.
29 Ibid., p. 35.
32 Weisel, Fort Owen Ledger, p. 215.
33 Dunbar & Phillips, Major John Owen, 2:40.
34 Ibid., p. 127.
35 Ibid., p. 76.
36 Ibid., p. 67.
37 Ibid., p. 88.
38 Ibid., p. 89.
39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., p. 91.


42 "Deeds of Father D'Aste Recounted by Woman Who Knew Him for Years, a tribute by Mrs. Peter Ronan," an unidentified newspaper article, p. 2, contained in the D'Aste file of the Oregon Province Archives, Spokane, WA.

43 Jerome D'Aste, S.J., journals in manuscript dated 17 July 1878 to 10 November 1920, 13 volumes, contained in the D'Aste file of the Oregon Province Archives, Spokane, WA.

44 Dunbar & Phillips, Major John Owen, 2:146.


49 Jerome D'Aste, S.J., journals in manuscript dated 17 July 1878 to 10 November 1920, 13 volumes, 1:22, contained in the D'Aste file of the Oregon Province Archives, Spokane, WA.

50 Ibid., p. 50.

51 Ibid., p. 54.

52 Jerome D'Aste, F. S.J., to F. Dewey, 29 December 1884, p. 1, in Re: various letters stack, contained in the D'Aste file of the Oregon Province Archives, Spokane, WA.


55 "Home News; Colored Minstrel," Tribune, 24 April 1891, p. 3.
56 "Enjoyment for Old and Young," Tribune, 29 May 1891, p. 2.

57 "Stevensville's Fourth of July Celebration," Tribune, 26 June 1891, p. 2.

58 "The Indians Removed At Last," Tribune, 16 October 1891, p. 2.


CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This study has explored and described the music phenomenon which occurred over a fifty year time span in a small community on the frontier of America. Parallel accounts of music history may be found in dozens of other localities, at similar times, and with similar variables, yet St. Mary's is unique. Among other things, the first band in Montana was organized and performed here. With the facts presented herein, the reader may gain insight into the evolution of a musical art in a western Montana community, and the people and places that figured predominantly in it.

The Flathead Indians have lived in the Bitterroot Valley for centuries with musical customs rich and numerous. Their music was very functional, where singing and dancing ceremonies celebrated many aspects of daily life. The basically vocal character of the music was accompanied by a drum and occasionally supplanted by a flute. Sixteen song types have been described herein, each having a distinct role of its own. With the arrival of the white man early in the nineteenth century, the Flathead way of life changed drastically. They heard of the power of
the Black Robes, and were convinced that they must have Jesuit religious instruction.

Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet brought Jesuit teachings to the Flatheads after four official requests from the natives. In 1840, he met the Indians for a summer rendezvous and was convinced of their sincerity. A year later he returned with men and supplies enough to begin a mission at their home, the Bitterroot Valley. The St. Mary's Mission was the first mission in Montana, abandoned in 1850, and reopened in 1866. The missionaries attempted to alter the wandering lifestyle of the Indian, and settle him more permanently at home. A musical exchange occurred between the two cultures where the first band in Montana was formed, and native language was set to European music.

Flathead Indian music has survived through time and exists very much in its original form yet today. Despite prevailing popular trends, many Indians on the Jocko Reservation still practice today, as before the white man's arrival, the musical heritage of their ancestors. They strive to keep their individual musical culture alive amidst a host of other influences. Many use commercially-made percussion instruments and electronic amplification for large pow wows but hold onto the musical style, form, and performance practice of the past.

As noted in the study itself, some of the original songs and arrangements that Father Mengarini composed using both cultures still exist and are now sung on specific
occasions. In addition, it is presently common practice for Indians to set native language and musical style into the white man's song form, melodic and harmonic structure. The musical cultures remain distinct and individual, yet the Indians incorporate some of the white man's more interesting musical aspects.

The mission lay vacant for sixteen years as the Fathers taught the Indians a lesson concerning piety. In 1866, the mission was reactivated and met the spiritual needs of the Flatheads until their relocation to the Jocko Reservation in 1891.

Many other factors of mission life have already received attention from researchers in the past. This study, along with its counterpart "Music At St. Ignatius Mission, 1854 - 1900," also a Master's Thesis from the University of Montana, brings attention to the ever increasing role of music and its contributions to people and events.

It would be an interesting project to compare the musical histories of several similar locations and circumstances. Were the events that transpired here in the Bitterroot Valley unique by any measurable degree? Comparison with the above mentioned St. Ignatius study was considered, yet the times of these two mission events tended to act more longitudinally in history than concurrently. Surely, the Jesuits had other missions operating in the west during this same time period. A
researcher could contrast the events transpiring in each to discern the differences which made them individual.

When the missionaries first left in 1850, John Owen leased their property and opened a trading post, Fort Owen. The musical celebrations and performances that occurred there were numerous and varied. The fort was the center of all social activities for the area, and served the cultural needs of the society well for more than twenty years. The town of Stevensville emerged with a social and economic base large enough to sustain many ongoing musical events, and the St. Mary's Mission Community strongly survived.

The wild frontier altered the white man's music. There were no fine parlors, palaces, or ball rooms in the untamed land for refined performance. The music was adapted to fit the situation, and the situation changed the music. The influence of the trappers and early settlers, whose musical tastes were not always the same as the Fathers, changed the musical environment dramatically.

American and European folk music seeped easily into the changing scene, while music for dancing was utilized often. The churches, social organizations, and schools each contributed to the musical melting pot as time continued. As attested to, the wide variety of musical sources was an important aspect during the period.

From these rich beginnings, music has continued to be an important part of life in the community of Stevensville. The music programs in the town have been continuous and
strong. Still proud of their "frontier spirit and independence," these rural working people know how music can enrich life. What began one hundred and forty-four years ago—as the St. Mary's Mission band of Indians and some twenty years later as the Stevensville Band, the Bitterroot Community Band exists today as a testimony to the community's commitment to instrumental music performance.

The need for further research in some areas touched on by this study is apparent. Of limited musical importance but of interest to this writer are the diaries of Father D'Aste. Many researchers have examined these original documents, currently included in the holdings of the Oregon Province Archives room at The Crosby Library in Spokane, Washington. In spite of their relative inaccessibility and illegible script, the diaries have been regularly quoted in published literature. Yet they remain in manuscript form. They are difficult to read and understand without historical and explanatory footnotes to put the information into perspective. Similar to the journals of Major John Owen, these diaries should be edited and published.

A researcher with an interest in instrumental music could use some of the material herein as a departure for study into the historical roles that bands played. The study of the band movement in the St. Mary's community would be a legitimate project. With the advent of newspaper publication and public schools late in the
nineteenth century, a clear picture of this musical speciality could be undertaken. Bands were playing, schools began training musicians, and newspapers were writing about it. St. Mary's Mission Band could well have been the beginning of bands in the northwest United States.

Some potential exists for publishing part of this study. Visitor centers are maintained at both St. Mary's Mission and Fort Owen State Historical Point. Information booklets and pamphlets are available to interested visitors, and an adaptation of this thesis would provide appropriate additional material. The organizations which administer these historical points, the St. Mary's Preservation Society and the Stevensville Historical Society, have shown interest in publishing this document.

In addition, restoration projects are occurring at both sites. The mission has recently undergone a complete termite extermination program, and damaged timbers have been replaced. At the same time, the Stevensville Historical Society is restoring part of the fort's huge south wall and bastions. Plans are set for a museum to open in Stevensville within the year. Continued local concern for history should draw more and more visitors and researchers to the community.

This research study has been an interesting and demanding project. The research itself was highlighted by the finding of new source material and the collecting and combining of numerous musical experiences into one new
reference. The presentation of historical information may be drawn upon by the casual reader as well as the researcher. It is hoped that this document proves to be of value.
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